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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that school and public libraries and librarians have not reached their potential as powerful catalysts in helping youth face the challenges of the twenty-first century. The first of four sections outlines potential responses of libraries to a number of students' needs, including the ability to locate and use information, preparation to use present-day technology, equal access to the marketplace of ideas and information, the ability to think critically in order to solve problems, the ability to communicate effectively, preparation to live in a multicultural world, and the desire to become lifelong learners. The second section reviews the current status of the nation's libraries--elementary school, middle school, and high school, as well as public libraries--noting that present library resources, staffing, and facilities are not satisfactory for meeting students' needs. A state and local checklist is provided in the third section for assessing what libraries need in the way of staffing, resources, and facilities in order to serve young people. Finally, the fourth section lists 12 proposals recommended for action at the Second White House Conference on Library and Information Service. (GL)

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KIDS NEED LIBRARIES:

SCHOOL AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES PREPARING THE YOUTH OF TODAY FOR THE WORLD OF TOMORROW

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN PREPARED BY VIRGINIA H. MATHEWS, JUDITH G. FLUM, AND KAREN A. WHITNEY ON BEHALF OF THE THREE YOUTH-SERVING DIVISIONS OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

***American Association of School Librarians**
***Association for Library Service to Children**
***Young Adult Services Division.**

IT IS TO BE USED AT ALL LEVELS OF ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE SECOND WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES.

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CONTENTS

Preface

INTRODUCTION

HOW LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS CAN HELP KIDS MEET THEIR NEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

CURRENT STATUS OF THE NATION'S LIBRARY SERVICE TO YOUTH

WHAT LIBRARIES NEED TO HELP KIDS PREPARE FOR THEIR FUTURE

A State and Local Checklist for Assessing What Libraries Need to Serve Youth

National Proposals Recommended for Action at the Second White House Conference on Library and Information Service

Preface

"Youth constitutes a global resource of the first magnitude."

U.N. Secretary-General Javier
de Cuellar in 1985 during
International Youth Year
"United Nations Chronicle Perspective",
U.N. CHRONICLE, January, 1986

"As a nation we face a paradox of our own making. We have created an economy that seeks literate, technically trained, and committed workers, while simultaneously we produce many young men and women who are semi-literate or functionally illiterate, unable to think critically and untrained in technical skills, hampered by high-risk lifestyles, and alienated from the social mainstream."

TURNING POINTS, PREPARING AMERICAN YOUTH
FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development
Carnegie Corporation of New York, June, 1989

"Far too many Americans today are growing up at risk. The majority of poor Americans are children, with one out of every four children under the age of six now living in poverty. We rank at the bottom of 20 industrialized nations with respect to infant mortality rates. Children whose families cannot find housing are now overcrowding shelters for runaways. And homeless children and families now constitute 30% of those without shelter. This year one out of every four students will leave high school without a diploma. In some of our inner cities 75% of all young people will have dropped out of school before they turn 16 years old. . . . We do strategic planning for every other area of critical importance. We have long-term plans for the military. . . . We have long-term plans for our nations highways, bridges, and tunnels, because they provide the infrastructure for our cities. . . . Children are the future security for this country and the future infrastructure for our democracy. So it is about time we worked on getting a comprehensive plan for the 63 million Americans who are children."

Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families,
Christopher Dodd, Chair,
introducing the Young Americans
Act, 1986.

"In an era of high pressure lobbying, political action committees and single issue voting, children and youth have few effective advocates. . . none (of whom) can make the major political contributions of which big business and many large organizations are capable. Children do not produce; they do not influence foreign trade or jobs or the stock market. They cost money. They do not have clout or the means to strike or to close down workplaces. They do not even vote, and many of the parents and other adults who should be representing them at the polls do not bother to vote either."

Barbara T. Rollock, Public
Library Services for Children,
Hamden, Ct. Library
Professional Publications, 1988.

INTRODUCTION

Planners of the 1991 White House Conference on Library and Information Services (WHCLIS) have identified three themes. All three apply to youth, the voters and leaders of the future.

Library and Information Services for:

***Productivity**
***Literacy**
***Democracy.**

These themes are particularly important in the last decade of the twentieth century. Only by addressing the issues inherent within these themes will we successfully meet the challenges in the twenty-first century. Some of these challenges are:

- **Improving our ability to compete in a global market.**
- **Finding solutions to mounting environmental threats, not just to our country, but to the entire planet.**
- **Rejuvenating citizen participation in our democratic process.**
- **Solving the illiteracy problem to empower individuals to cope with rapid social and technological change.**

The Preamble to Public Law 100-382, approved and signed by the President on August 8, 1988, calls for the second White House Conference on Library and Information Services and provides for the states to conduct Governors Conferences and other pre-WHCLIS activities leading up to the national conference to be held in Washington, D.C. July 9-13, 1991. This Preamble cites, among other findings, five that are most relevant to consideration of our youth issues and recommendations:

- **Access to information and ideas is indispensable to the development of human potential, the advancement of civilization, and the continuance of enlightened self-government;**

- **Social, demographic, and economic shifts of the past decade have intensified the rate of change and require that Americans of all age groups develop and sustain literacy and other lifelong learning habits;**

- **Expanding technological developments offer unprecedented opportunities for application to teaching and learning and to new means to provide access to library and information services;**

- **The growth and augmentation of the Nation's library and information services are essential if all Americans, without regard to race, ethnic background, or geographic location are to have reasonable access to adequate information and lifelong learning;**

- **The future of our society depends on developing the learning potential inherent in all children and youth, especially literary, reading, research, and retrieval skills.**

HOW LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS CAN HELP KIDS MEET THEIR NEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

Youth today face many challenges as the twenty-first century approaches. They are the decision makers, workers, and parents of tomorrow. Many kids lack the necessary support from family, school, and society to avoid drugs, AIDS, poverty, suicide, pregnancy and other obstacles to becoming productive thinking citizens. Access to information and ideas can be a powerful catalyst for providing hope for children and young adults.

School and public libraries and librarians, when adequately equipped to do the job, can be that powerful catalyst in a young person's life. These libraries offer complementary and mutually reinforcing programs for children and young adults from infancy to eighteen years of age. For children and young adults in school, the school library, which carries out its important role in structured learning as its first priority, also meets the personal, recreational and informal learning needs of many children. The public library provides the transition from babyhood into formal learning, the resources and services for personal information and recreation, and the transition from structured learning into self-determined lifelong learning. When both types of libraries are well supported, they can team up to provide a seamless information and enjoyment resource.

School and public libraries and librarians cannot solve all the problems youth have, but they can and do make a significant difference. Our society needs citizens who are literate in the fullest sense, so they can be imaginative, productive, involved in self-government, in command of their own lives, and able to contribute to the lives of others. For this to happen, kids must have some of their needs met by adults and be empowered to meet the rest themselves. Caring about kids and treating them with dignity is essential; it ignites a sense of hope and belief in the future, and it provides a measure of protection against self-destructive behaviors that often tempt youth.

What follows are examples of how school and public libraries and librarians can help children and young adults meet their needs. Some contributions are made uniquely by one type of library serving kids, but most are made by both at different times and in various degrees.

KIDS NEED: The belief in a worthwhile future and understanding of their responsibility and contribution to that future.

LIBRARIES CAN:

*Offer resources, displays, and programs concerning local, national, and world-wide issues of today and tomorrow to encourage curiosity and interest in the democratic process and in finding societal solutions.

*Provide positive role models in real life and through books, video, and other resources to inspire and to give shape to aspirations and goals.

*Offer resources that help youth think about and plan their futures.

*Encourage youth to get involved in the community and to become advocates for their wants and needs.

KIDS NEED: A positive sense of self-worth.

LIBRARIES CAN:

*Listen to youth, treat them with respect and dignity, take time to understand them and serve as facilitators and catalysts.

*Answer all reference questions or requests for resources without judgement and with confidentiality.

*Demonstrate a trust and belief in youth that almost no other institution in society can match by affording children and young adults all the rights and privileges of adults in the library including library cards, access to the entire collection, and support for their right to read.

*Provide opportunities for young adults to participate significantly in and contribute to the library and the community, individually and through advisory groups, giving them the opportunity to explore their strengths and skills.

*Provide resources and activities for children and young adults that lend perspective to their place in history, race, ethnic groups and family.

KIDS NEED: The ability to locate and use information and the awareness that this ability is an essential key to self-realization in the Information Age.

LIBRARIES CAN:

*Encourage curiosity, highlighting the delight of discovery.

*Collaborate with classroom teachers to design learning activities that teach students to locate, evaluate, and communicate information effectively.

*Teach children and young adults the skills needed to search for information both within the library and outside it, and the use of reference sources, including databases, computers, fax machines, and other technologies that can be used to store, transmit and locate information.

*Maintain an up-to-date community resource file for children and young adults that contains information about community services that assist youth with personal and family issues as well as information on clubs and activities for youth.

*Link the resources of the library with those of other agencies and institutions to promote the concept of an ever-widening array of information and ideas.

KIDS NEED: Preparation to use present-day technology and to adapt to a changing technological world.

LIBRARIES CAN:

*Instruct children and young adults in the use of computers and other technologies that can enliven and encourage learning.

*Provide free public access computers with an array of software for youth to explore.

*Offer opportunities to use a variety of information technologies that store, transmit, and retrieve information.

KIDS NEED: Equal access to the marketplace of ideas and information.

LIBRARIES CAN:

*Provide equal access for all youth to all library services and to all information resources regardless of the content or technological format.

*Instill the concept of intellectual freedom by demonstrating its principles through resources, policies and services.

*Reach out to all children and young adults in their service area, including at-risk youth, by providing opportunities for them to benefit from the resources available in the library.

*Collaborate with agencies serving hard-to-reach youth, such as child care services, by providing books and other materials and by offering training for staff and parent volunteers in the use of these items.

KIDS NEED: The ability to think critically in order to solve problems.

LIBRARIES CAN:

*Engage youth in discussions about books and other materials, examining opposing viewpoints and compromises, how characters made choices, and how problems were solved.

*Help children and young adults to monitor their thought processes as they locate and use information.

*Assist children and young adults in developing search strategies when seeking information or doing research.

*Provide resources that enable children and young adults to explore issues of importance to them and offer options for personal decision-making.

*Encourage and assist teachers in developing resource-based learning experiences for youth.

*Provide developmentally appropriate resources for children and young adults as they progress in their abilities to think critically.

KIDS NEED: The ability to communicate effectively -- to listen, to speak, to read, and to write.

LIBRARIES CAN:

*Provide language experiences in listening, talking, and playing with words and word associations for even the youngest children, building a foundation for storytelling, booktalking, viewing and reading aloud to older children and young adults.

*Initiate and coordinate with teachers school-wide projects that help students sharpen reading and word skills.

*Sponsor school-wide initiatives such as *Drop Everything and Read* (DEAR) and *Sustained Silent Reading* periods during which everyone in school, adults as well as youth, reads a book of choice for enjoyment.

*Sponsor *Read-Out* events inviting community celebrities to read passages from their favorite books and "read-a-thons" inviting the whole community to spend a day reading together.

*Provide opportunities for youth to practice reading and communication skills through summer reading programs, "lap-sit" programs, storytimes, book discussion clubs, contests, peer tutoring, debates, and book and music reviews to share with peers.

*Ensure that youth learn to use production equipment such as computers, video recording, and other means of recording, expressing and disseminating their perceptions, observations, opinions, and aspirations.

*Develop cooperative school and public library programs to encourage children and young adults to enjoy reading.

KIDS NEED: Preparation to live in a multicultural world and to respect the rights and dignity of all people.

LIBRARIES CAN:

*Offer resources to even the youngest children that show people of varied ethnic and racial backgrounds and cultures and life situations in order to broaden their understanding of other people.

*Provide multilingual resources and staff who can communicate with the different populations in the community.

*Demonstrate with stories and visuals that human failings and human capabilities relate to individuals, not to classes or categories of people.

*Present programs and displays celebrating cultural diversity.

*Create intergenerational experiences using library resources and programs that help youth and older adults better understand and value each other.

KIDS NEED: The desire and ability to become lifelong learners.

LIBRARIES CAN:

*Encourage youth to explore their interests to lead them to new discoveries.

*Promote curiosity and questions and help children and young adults find answers, highlighting the delight of finding out and knowing.

*Reinforce family involvement in learning by showing parents how to carry out learning activities at home.

*Support child-serving agencies in reinforcing good learning habits and sharing self-learning activities for children.

*Provide safe, welcoming places for children and young adults to gather with friends to enjoy library resources or to be alone to pursue personal interests.

*Demonstrate that a library is a laboratory for learning to learn, providing practice in self-determination and the setting and achieving of personal goals.

*Entice youth to visit and use the library through booktalks, outreach activities, and by developing interesting learning activities with teachers and other community leaders.

KIDS NEED: Creative ability to dream a better world.

LIBRARIES CAN:

*Expose children and young adults to a wide variety of ideas, concepts, and experiences through a diverse collection of resources, speakers, exhibits, and events that broaden their view of the world.

*Stimulate imaginations with stories, things to touch, dramatic play, music, puppets, crafts, projects, and resource people.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE NATION'S LIBRARY SERVICE TO YOUTH

Present library resources, staffing, and facilities are not satisfactory to do the job outlined above! At the time when they are needed most, many school and public libraries have had to cut drastically their direct services to children and young adults. Informational and guidance programs for parents, teachers, community youth workers, and other caregivers have been cut. These are the very programs that can help develop healthy self-esteem, a secure literacy habit, and learning confidence in children and young adults.

Elementary school libraries, many of them established or strengthened in the 1960s and early 1970s have withered and shrunk in collection size, quality, and program of service. Many have no professional librarian. Middle schools and high schools have fared little better. The latest figures available from the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (1985-86) show that schools with library media centers spent fewer 1985 dollars per pupil (adjusted for inflation) than were spent in 1958. The same set of statistics show that although 79% of the public schools had some portion of certified staff, in many cases this was shared between two or more schools. Although state certification requirements vary greatly, the fact is that only 64% of public schools had the services of a fully qualified library media specialist.

In public libraries, the situation is much the same. Many children's and young adult librarian positions have been eliminated. Positions that do exist often go unfilled because fewer new library school graduates are being prepared for children's or young adult positions. Two recent Fast Response Statistics Surveys (FRSS) of young adult and children's services conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, show that over 50% of public library users are under the age of 18, while one of every four public library users is between the age of 12 to 18. Only 11% of public libraries have a young adult librarian to provide services to this age group with very special needs. In fact, only 79% of libraries serving 1,000 or more users a week have a children's librarian, even though children's services builds an essential base for literacy and information use.

WHAT LIBRARIES NEED TO HELP KIDS PREPARE FOR THEIR FUTURE

Upgraded school and public library services are essential for all American youth from infancy to age eighteen.

A STATE AND LOCAL CHECKLIST FOR ASSESSING WHAT LIBRARIES NEED TO SERVE YOUTH

State and local areas differ in major issues, levels of library service, and strengths and weaknesses of school libraries and services to children and young adults in public libraries. Each state must develop priorities and potential legislation based on its specific issues and local needs, involving children, young adults, and their advocates in the process. The checklist below is designed to help assess specific gaps in meeting the needs of children and young adults in school and public libraries. If you answer "No" to any of the following questions, you will need to develop proposals for consideration by the delegates at your state's pre-White House Conference.

___YES____NO Are all public schools required to have libraries and to have them staffed by certified school library media specialists?

___YES____NO Do all public libraries in your state have a program of service to children staffed by a professional children's librarian?

___YES____NO Do all public libraries in your state have a program of service for young adults up to age 18 staffed by a professional young adult librarian?

___YES____NO Do librarians serving children and young adults in your state receive salaries comparable to salaries of other professional librarians? Do they have equal opportunities for career advancement?

__YES____NO Does your state have a network for sharing resources that will provide access for all citizens to the resources of school, public and special libraries?

__YES____NO Are libraries placed accessibly in communities and funded adequately to provide convenient hours of service?

__YES____NO Do school and public library policies and practices adhere to the concepts of intellectual freedom and the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights?

__YES____NO Is there a state level school library media consultant within the State Department of Education to provide leadership for school library media programs in the state?

__YES____NO Are there state level children's and young adult library consultants within the State Library Department to provide leadership for public library programs for children and young adults in the state?

__YES____NO Do all children and young adults, regardless of geographic location or physical disabilities, have equal access to the information resources of the state?

__YES____NO Do the collections of school libraries adequately support the schools' curricula?

__YES____NO Do the children's' collections, young adult collections, and general collections in public libraries adequately meet the educational, recreational, and personal needs of all youth, regardless of race or national origin?

__YES____NO Do school and public library collections maintain a high level of currency by providing resources that have been published within the past 3 years, especially in subject areas such as science and health where currency is essential?

__YES____NO Do children and young adults in your state have free access to electronic databases?

__YES____NO Do all school and public libraries have fax machines to facilitate resource sharing? Do all school libraries have telephones?

__YES____NO Do all children and young adults have free access to computers in school and public libraries?

__YES____NO Does your state dedicate a percentage of state educational funds for school library media programs? Do school library media programs in your state receive money through P.L. 100-297, the *Hawkins, Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988*?

__YES____NO Has your state dedicated a percentage of the public library grant monies it administers to programs serving children and young adults? Has your state offered other incentives to libraries to develop services for children and young adults?

__YES____NO Does your state have certification requirements for school library media specialists for elementary through high school? Are they based on *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs* approved by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and the Association for Educational Communications Technology (AECT) in 1988?

__YES____NO Do graduate library and educational programs in your state, accredited by the American Library Association (ALA) or National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), offer courses that prepare librarians to serve children and young adults in public libraries and school libraries? Is the preparation consistent with the competency standards published by the Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC), the competency standards published by Young Adult Services Division (YASD), and the guidelines published by AASL and AECT?

NATIONAL PROPOSALS RECOMMENDED FOR ACTION AT THE SECOND WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE

All the proposals below are national in scope and recommended as future legislation to better serve children and young adults in school and public libraries.

** Enact a school library services title or act to:

- Establish an office within the U.S. Department of Education responsible for providing leadership to school library media programs across the nation.

- Create federal legislation to provide demonstration grants to schools for teachers and school library media specialists to design resource-based instructional activities that provide opportunities for students to explore diverse ideas and multiple sources of information.

- Establish grants to provide information technology to school library media centers.

** Enact a public library children's services title or act to include:

- Demonstration grants for services to children.

- Funds for parent/family education projects for early childhood services, involving early childhood agencies.

- Funds to work in partnership with daycare centers and other early childhood providers to offer deposit collections and training in the use of library resources.

** Enact a public library young adult services title or act to include:

- Demonstration grants for services to young adults.

- Funds for youth at-risk demonstration grants, to provide outreach services for young adults on the verge of risk behavior as well as for those already in crisis, working in partnership with community youth-serving agencies.

- Funds for a national library-based "Kid Corps" program for young adults to offer significant, salaried youth participation projects to build self-esteem, develop skills, and expand the responsiveness and level of library services for teenagers.

** Create federal legislation to fund the development of partnership programs between school and public libraries to provide comprehensive library services to children and young adults.

** Establish and fund a national research agenda to document and evaluate how children and young adults develop the abilities that make them information literate.

** Require categorical aid for school library media services and resources in any federal legislation which provides funds for instructional purposes.

** Develop federal legislation to establish a nation-wide resource-sharing network that includes school library media programs as equal partners and ensures that all youth have access equal to that of other citizens to the nation's library resources.

** Develop federal legislation to fund school and public library demonstration intergenerational programs that provide meaningful services (such as tutoring, leisure activities, sharing books, ideas, hobbies) for latchkey children and young adolescents in collaboration with networks and such private associations as AARP, which address the interests and needs of senior citizens.

** Enact federal legislation to fund family demonstration literacy programs that involve school and public libraries and other family-serving agencies.

** Create legislation to fund discretionary grants to library schools and schools of education for the development of collaborative graduate programs to educate librarians to serve children and young adults.

** Provide opportunities, perhaps through the National Endowment for the Arts, for potential authors from minority cultures, to develop their abilities to write stories and create other materials about their culture for youth.

** Ensure that all legislation authorizing child care programs, drug prevention programs and other youth at-risk programs include funds for books and library materials, to be selected in consultation with professional librarians.